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FM AMEMBASSY VILNIUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3253  
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S E C R E T VILNIUS 000068

FOR S/WCI AND EUR/NB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2019

TAGS: PTER PREL LH

SUBJECT: (S) LITHUANIA POISED TO ACCEPT GTMO DETAINEES

REF: VILNIUS 44 (NOTAL) AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: CDA Damian Leader for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary: Lithuania is ready to move expeditiously to approve resettlement of two detainees from Guantanamo Bay and has asked that we put our request into a formal letter from the Secretary. The Foreign Minister also asked that a team from Washington be prepared to come and brief senior GOL officials in the near future on details about the detainees in question, and the arrangements that Lithuania will need to make in order to accept them. Action request in paragraph 6.  
End summary.

¶2. (S) Prime Minister Kubilius told the Ambassador January 29 that, although the Lithuanian cabinet had not yet made a formal decision on accepting any Guantanamo detainees, he thought the GOL could be "very helpful" to the United States on the issue. On January 30, Foreign Minister Usackas convoked the Charge to follow up and provide a readout of GAERC discussions about resettlement of GTMO detainees. Usackas said that EU foreign ministers had discussed the resettlement of GTMO detainees for about 20 minutes during the January 26 - 27 GAERC. They decided the EU should send a positive signal, welcoming the president's decision to close the facility. He said that following the discussion, five or six member states indicated they were positively inclined to accept detainees. These included Italy, Portugal, Lithuania, Finland, and Ireland. Usackas thought that the end result of the EU's discussion would be a chapeau statement of encouragement from the EU, with actual arrangements for resettlement being done on a bilateral basis.

¶3. (S) The Foreign Minister reiterated Lithuania's positive inclination to accept two detainees who pose no threat to society. (Note: under Lithuanian law, the GOL can admit only those foreigners who do not pose a threat, "to public security, public policy, or public health.") Usackas added that he would like to initiate the formal process "sooner rather than later" because, if the timeline stretches too long, this issue will become a part of Lithuania's presidential campaign (note: officially beginning in March). This would not be helpful at all, he added. He said that officials were looking for a date before President Adamkus departs on vacation in mid-February to convene a meeting of the National Defense Council in order to make a final decision on whether to accept the detainees.

¶4. (S) Usackas thought the National Defense Council meeting might be held as early as February 2 or 3. Before the meeting, he would need an "official" request from the USG that Lithuania take in two detainees, including a statement that the detainees would not pose a threat to Lithuania. Although we understand the GOL is focusing on two specific Uzbek detainees (reftel), Usackas emphasized that the official request should not mention specific detainees or their nationalities. He added that the GOL would want to get more detailed information about the detainees, if possible from a team from Washington, but first would need to consult with GOL lawyers. His initial thought was that it would be best if the Washington team came after the Council meeting.

¶5. (S) Usackas said he had already discussed this issue with MPs, including Seimas speaker Arunas Valinskas. According to

him, they were "relieved" when he told them that the number of detainees under discussion was "in the couples, not in the dozens."

¶6. (S) Action request: Post believes this is a serious opportunity for Lithuania to agree to accept two detainees in the near future, but the window could close quickly. Given the timeline Usackas previewed, we request a letter from the Secretary to FM Usackas as soon as possible requesting that Lithuania resettle two detainees, and stating that the two detainees would pose no threat "to public security, public policy, or public health." Such a letter would lead to a National Defense Council meeting in the coming days at which President Adamkus could give the final approval on resettling the two. A State/DOD team should also be prepared to come to Vilnius as soon as the GOL is ready to receive them.

LEADER